

**DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
LHC, INC.
LHC PIT SITE
FLATHEAD COUNTY, MONTANA**

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is required under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). An EA functions to identify, disclose, and analyze the impacts of a proposed action. This document may disclose impacts that have no legislatively required mitigation measures, or over which there is no regulatory authority.

The state law that regulates gravel mining operations in Montana is the Opencut Mining Act. This law and the rules adopted thereunder place operational guidance and limitations on a project during its lifetime, and provide for the reclamation of land affected by opencut mining operations.

Approval or denial of the application will be based on a determination of whether or not the proposed operation complies with the Opencut Mining Act, the Rules adopted thereunder, and local laws and regulations--not on the popularity of the project.

PROPONENT: LHC, Inc.

PROJECT NAME: Amendment of Opencut Gravel Mining Permit – LHC Pit Site

LOCATION: NE¼NE¼ Section 26, T29N, R22W **COUNTY:** Flathead

PERSON PREPARING EA: Rod Samdahl

E.A. COMPLETED: 05/01/07
(Date)

TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION:

The applicant proposes to amend the hours of operation of its permit to allow an early start up time to run its concrete and asphalt batch plants. This request applies only to batching and hauling products to customers who need to start early in the day during the summer construction season, but does not change existing hours for mining, operating the wash plant or the crusher. Currently, the allowable hours of operation for the main pit and facilities are from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The requested start up time would be 5:00 a.m. All other conditions on the mining permit remain the same.

A: Significant Unavoidable Impacts. B: Insignificant as a result of conditioned mitigation. C: Insignificant as proposed.

				POTENTIAL IMPACTS		
	A	B	C	LONG TERM	SHORT TERM	AMPLIFICATION
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT						
1. <u>TOPOGRAPHY</u>			X			No effect.
2. <u>GEOLOGY</u> ; Stability						No effect.
3. <u>SOILS</u> ; Quality, Distribution			X			No effect.
4. <u>WATER</u> ; Quality, Quantity; Distribution			X			No effect.
5. <u>AIR</u> ; Quality			X		X	Some deterioration of air quality would occur, but only as a result of additional hours being operated. All existing limits and restrictions on dust and other contaminants remain in place.
6. <u>UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE, or LIMITED</u> environmental resources						No effect.
BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT						
1. <u>TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN, and AQUATIC</u> ; species and habitats			X			No effect.
2. <u>VEGETATION</u> ; Quantity, quality, species			X			No effect.
3. <u>AGRICULTURE</u> ; grazing, crops, production			X			No effect.
				POTENTIAL IMPACTS		
	A	B	C	LONG TERM	SHORT TERM	AMPLIFICATION
HUMAN ENVIRONMENT						
1. <u>SOCIAL</u> , structures and mores			X		X	There would be changes in early morning operations that may be noticed by some individuals.
2. <u>CULTURAL</u> ; Uniqueness, diversity						No effect.
3. <u>POPULATION</u> ; quantity and diversity						No effect on the population is anticipated.
4. <u>HOUSING</u> ; quantity and distribution						No effects are anticipated on the quantity or distribution of housing due to this proposed change in hours of operation.
5. <u>HUMAN HEALTH & SAFETY</u>			X		X	Some additional dust and traffic may be generated at the site due to longer hours but the operator must comply with existing traffic and air quality laws. NOISE: In order to operate early in the day without causing an unacceptable amount of noise, the applicant has installed light-sensitive strobe lights on its front-end loaders in place of the back-up alarms that some find objectionable. The

					<p>applicant has also coordinated with federal mine safety officials to allow the utilization of a "backup watch person" during the daylight hours between dawn and 7:00 a.m. Concrete mixer trucks would be loaded inside a closed building to eliminate noise generated from the plant.</p> <p><u>TRAFFIC:</u> Traffic is becoming more of an issue on Stillwater Drive, especially with the new high school located near the intersection of Stillwater and West Reserve and residential development in the area. By starting deliveries earlier in the day, much of this industrial traffic may be finished before normal passenger traffic starts up at the school and residents begin their drive to work. Currently, the plants do not start up until 7:00 a.m., which puts the first heavy surge of trucks into the rush times along West Reserve between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.</p>
6. <u>COMMUNITY & PERSONAL INCOME</u>			X	X	The landowner may benefit from additional revenue or value added by this operation.
7. <u>EMPLOYMENT</u> ; quantity and distribution			X	X	No additional employees would be hired to assist in daily operations.
8. <u>TAX BASE</u> ; local and state tax revenue			X	X	Additional taxes may be generated for the state and county as aggregates are hauled and used to improve adjacent land.
9. <u>GOVERNMENT SERVICES</u> ; demand			X	X	The site would be monitored through its permit life along with other sites in the area.
10. <u>INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL and AGRICULTURAL</u> activities			X		No effect.
11. <u>HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL</u>					No effect.
12. <u>AESTHETICS</u>			X	X	Equipment working at the site would be visible to the general public and the operation could be heard earlier in the day by those individuals close to it.
13. <u>ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS and GOALS</u> ; local and regional					This site is planned to be part of a local subdivision.
14. <u>DEMANDS on ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES</u> of land, water, air and energy					There are no unusual demands on environmental resources.
15. <u>TRANSPORTATION</u> ; networks and traffic flows			X	X	There would be some additional traffic added as this gravel pit accesses the county roads.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: **The Department could deny the application as submitted. The proponent could then submit a modified application or submit an application for another site.**

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: **Agencies and individuals in the area would be contacted for their comments on this Draft proposal.**

OTHER GROUPS OR AGENCIES CONTACTED OR WHICH MAY HAVE OVERLAPPING JURISDICTION: **DEQ's Air Resources Management Bureau regarding air quality, MSHA and OSHA regarding mine safety.**

REGULATORY IMPACT ON THE APPLICANT’S PRIVATE PROPERTY: The analysis done in response to the Private Property Assessment Act indicates no impact. The Department does not plan to deny the application or impose conditions that would restrict the use of private property so as to constitute a taking.

INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS EA: None

RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS: No further analysis is required.

Approved By _____
(Signature)

(Date)

